

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USINT HAVANA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 065542

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:MILI, CU, ET, SO

SUBJECT: PROTEST TO CUBA OVER AIRCRAFT INCIDENT

REF: A) HAVANA 597, B) STATE 55660, C) HAVANA 420

1. FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF REFTEL A, DEPARTMENT HAS RECAST
TEXT OF PROTEST NOTE TO CUBAN AUTHORITIES TO READ AS
FOLLOWS:

2. BEGIN TEXT: THE UNITED STATES SHARES THE CONCERN OF
CUBA, AS OUTLINED IN ITS AIDE-MEMOIRE NUMBER 250 OF
FEBRURY 8,1978, THAT ACTIONS OR MANEUVERS OF THE AIR-
CRAFT OF ONE COUNTRY IN REGARD TO THOSE OF ANOTHER QUOTE
BE UNDERTAKEN IN CONDITIONS OF UTMOST SAFETY, AND IN SUCH
A MANNER AS TO AVOID POSSIBLE ACCIDENTS UNQUOTE. CON-
SEQUENTLY, THE UNITED STATES WISHES TO POINT OUT THAT ON
JANUARY 17, 1978, A CUBAN MIG AIRCRAFT, SIDE NUMBER 361,
ENGAGED IN MANEUVERS OVER INTERNATIONAL WATERS AND IN
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INTERNATIONAL AIRSPACE WHICH THREATENED THE SAFETY OF A
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AIRPLANE.

THE INCIDENT OCCURRED EAST OF HAVANA AT LATITUDE 21-58'N,
LONGITUDE 075-57'W COMMENCING AT 7:55 A.M. LOCAL TIME.
THE MIG-21 APPROACHED AN UNARMED UNITED STATES MILITARY

AIRCRAFT FROM THE SOUTH. THE US AIRCRAFT WAS FLYING AT AN ALTITUDE OF 4000 FT ON COURSE OF 115 T. MIG 361 MADE ONE HIGH SPEED PASS APPROXIMATELY FIFTY TO ONE HUNDRED FEET IN FRONT OF THE UNITED STATES AIRCRAFT PERPENDICULAR TO ITS TRACK. THE TACTICS EMPLOYED BY THE CUBAN INTERCEPT RESULTED IN THE STABILITY OF THE AMERICAN AIRPLANE BEING AFFECTED BY THE BACKWASH OF THE CUBAN MIG. SUCH A MANEUVER WAS CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS OF SAFETY AND COULD HAVE RESULTED IN A COLLISION OF THE TWO AIRCRAFT. THE CUBAN AIRCRAFT DEPARTED AT APPROXIMATELY 1100 AM LOCAL TIME.

THE UNITED STATES AIRCRAFT WAS EXERCISING THE FREEDOM TO FLY IN INTERNATIONAL AIRSPACE OVER THE HIGH SEAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW.

SINCE THE ABOVE QUOTED CUBAN AIDE-MEMOIRE POSTDATES THE INCIDENT OF JANUARY 17, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT INTERPRETES THIS AIDE-MEMOIRE AS A STATEMENT OF CUBAN POLICY TO TAKE STEPS TO AVOID SUCH INCIDENTS IN THE FUTURE. IN VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF OTHER SUCH INCIDENTS IN THE RECENT PAST, THE UNITED STATES WAS PARTICULARLY GRATIFIED TO LEARN, IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE AIDE-MEMOIRE OF FEBRUARY 8, 1978, THAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT NOW HAS QUOTE NO INTENTION TO MOLEST US AIRCRAFT WHEN THEY REALIZE THEIR FLIGHTS IN INTERNATIONALONES UNQUOTE. VANCE
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